

Great Migration and Black Metropolis Feasibility Study



2013
Updated 2022

A Timely Update

Our Case for Designation

Unless the lion learns to write his own story, the hunter will always be the hero

African Proverb

The Bronzeville-Black Metropolis National Heritage Area (BMNHA) will tell the story of The Great Migration to the entire world. We have a compelling story to tell. We do it daily. We share it on our tours and in our community interactions. We reach out to the city and shout it to our young people who need to know where they came from.

The story is about the growth from what was first called “the Black Belt” in a restricted, segregated area, to one that developed into a thriving “Black Metropolis.” Creative and intellectual leaders documented this development in scholarly works, as well as fiction, poetry, theater, art, dance, and music. Foremost is the seminal 1945 work by St. Clair Drake and Horace Cayton, *Black Metropolis A Study of Negro Life in a Northern City*. As Richard Wright wrote in the introduction, “I went to Chicago as a migrant from Mississippi. And there in that great iron city, that impersonal, mechanical city, amid the steam, the smoke, the snowy winds, the blistering suns; there in that self-conscious city, that city so deadly dramatic and stimulating, we caught whispers of the meaning that life could have, and were pushed and pounded by facts much too big for us.”

Several other brilliant and scholarly studies trace the culture and community of Black Chicago, including University of Chicago’s Adam Green’s *Selling the Race: Culture, Community and Black Chicago*, which shows how Black Chicagoans joined the Renaissance usually attributed to Harlem. Adding to this are the essays in *The Black Chicago Renaissance*, edited by Northwestern University’s Darlene Clark Hine and John McCluskey, Jr. that give a bigger insight into the development of the culture of Bronzeville. There are so many examples of the documented history of this great community, including the story of the *Defender* newspaper whose reach was local, national and international. This reach was reciprocal and adds to the wealth we have to share and what will draw tourism to the Heritage Area from far and wide.

Writers Andrew Abbott and Jolyon Wurr in the Encyclopedia of Chicago note that social scientists consider Chicago to be the “most studied city.” The result is a deep and growing body of historic works, social history, studies of urban policy, which provide a multi-faceted landscape of interpretive material on how the Great Migration of Black people from the south to Chicago transformed not only this city but transformed American Culture. This is a story that



has been long neglected, erased, and buried but that deserves to be told in every possibly manner, in every last corner of the Bronzeville-Black Metropolis National Heritage Area. Now is the time to grant this important historic, cultural and natural resource official designation.

Background

In 2013 the Black Metropolis National Heritage Area Commission (Commission), the Bronzeville Community Development Partnership (the Partnership) and its partners submitted a completed feasibility study to the National Park Service for the designation of a National Heritage Area focused on the Great Migration. The Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP) assisted with the development of the original study and this update. We also gratefully acknowledge the assistance of the City of Chicago via its Department of Housing and Economic Development, and the Historic Preservation Division of the Department of Planning and Development in the development of the original study. It has been nearly ten years since the submission of the 2013 Feasibility Study and so much has happened to advance the discussion of the Great Migration and its impact on American Culture. Consequently, this update to the study was warranted.

The Original Study

The original 2013 feasibility study is attached to this update section. The 2013 document follows the guidelines for studies published at the time including the following elements: executive summary, introduction, history and contributions, themes, affected environment, management alternatives, application of interim NHA criteria, vision statement, impact assessment, nationally distinctive landscapes, community engagement, funding considerations, partnership commitments, House and Senate resolutions, BMNHA Steering Committee, literature review, IDNR references, and a description of the proposed project boundaries. An extensive appendix identifies assets in the study area by theme, civic engagement and public involvement, funding alternatives, partner organizations, a copy of House Resolution 5505 (from 2008) and Senate Joint Resolution 0067 from 2010, the Steering Committee members, a literature review, and IDNR references.

The Study Area

The Black Metropolis study area is located in the greater Bronzeville community of the City of Chicago, approximately five miles south of downtown. The general boundaries are 18th Street to the North, 71st Street to the South, Lake Michigan to the East, and Canal Street to the West. This area represents an assemblage of natural, historic, educational, and recreational resources. It is a cohesive, nationally distinctive landscape that is worthy of preservation through the heritage area designation. Figure 1 below is a map of the study area with congressional district boundaries.



Figure 1. Black Metropolis Study Area with Legislative District Boundaries



The 2022 Update

Adding to our story is the recently designated Pullman National Monument on its way to becoming a national park. The Pullman story is enhanced with the A. Philip Randolph Pullman Porter Museum (aprpullmanportermuseum.org), which interprets the contribution that the Pullman Porters played in the Great Migration and in national labor history. Its famed visitor center opened in the summer of 2021.

The Ida B. Wells monument was dedicated in 2021 highlighting the work of the journalist and Civil Rights icon as part of a national and international story. Ida's home, honorary street and marker on the site of the Ida B. Wells Homes public housing are part of a Chicago effort to honor her work. This also includes the renaming of Congress Boulevard to Ida B. Wells Drive. We have quite a story to tell.

We have forged relationships with Chicago organizations such as Choose Chicago, the city's tourism center. We work with colleges and universities to provide interviews, tours and lectures for students and faculty, including Illinois Tech (Illinois Institute of Technology), University of Chicago, DePaul University, Roosevelt University, Northwestern University, Chicago College of Optometry, and more. We collaborate with Black Metropolis Research Consortium (BMRC), Chicago History Museum, Civic Knowledge Project (University of Chicago), Bronzeville Historical Society, Camp Douglas Restoration Foundation, and Chicago Urban League.

We are working with the Rosenwald Schools National Park Julius Rosenwald & Rosenwald Schools National Historical Park Campaign (rosenwaldpark.org). It is our hope that a visitor center can become a part of Bronzeville by virtue of the institutions that Rosenwald funded and supported.

New Assets and Updates in the Study Area

The following tables and maps identify new assets in the study area and provide updates to assets identified in the original 2013 study. The first map (Figure 2) and table (Table 1) identify new assets that have been developed since publication of the 2013 study. The second map (Figure 3) and table (Table 2) were identified as significant assets in the 2013 study and have major updates worth noting. The tables use the same classification categories as those used in the original study including: Arts & Culture, Business & Entrepreneurial Pursuits, Education, Industry & Labor, Health & Medicine, Military Life, Politics, Recreation & Professional Sports, Religion & Social Services, Social Activism & Civil Rights, Urban Design & Green Infrastructure.



Map#	Asset Name	Category	Description	Address
1	35 th Street Pedestrian Bridge	Urban Design & Green Infrastructure	The bridge was completed in 2016 and connects the Bronzeville community to the lakefront to the east over South Lake Shore Drive and several railroad tracks.	3500 S. Lake Shore Drive
2	1919 Race Riots Markers	Social Activism & Civil Rights	The Chicago Race Riot of 1919 Commemoration Project comprises a series of markers that pay tribute to those killed in the 1919 events. Fourteen markers are now installed, with a total of 38 anticipated upon completion. The markers are located at the sites where the deaths occurred.	Various, 29 th Street and the Lake
3	Boxville Marketplace	Business & Entrepreneurial Pursuits	This business incubator, marketplace, and outdoor community event space is fashioned from re-purposed shipping containers. The project started in 2014 with the “Bike Box” and has grown to include 17 containers with space for 20 local businesses operating year-round.	330 E. 51 st Street
4	Bronzeville Artists Lofts	Arts & Culture	The \$5.9 million renovation of a long-vacant commercial building now includes 16 live-work spaces for artists and 12,200 square feet of ground-floor commercial space. Opened in 2014.	436 E. 47 th Street
5	Bronzeville Trail (proposed)	Urban Design & Green Infrastructure	The Bronzeville Trail Taskforce envisions the creation of a 2-mile linear park on the abandoned Kenwood “L” line embankment running from Kenwood Avenue and 40 th Street on the West terminating at Lake Park Ave and 41 st Street and connecting to the 41 st Street pedestrian bridge to the Lakefront.	40 th and Kenwood Avenue
6	Bronzeville Walk of Fame	Arts & Culture	More than 100 neighborhood residents are celebrated on the Bronzeville Walk of Fame. They include civil rights activist Ida B Wells, poet Gwendolyn Brooks, and astronaut Robert H Lawrence, Jr. The bronze plaques are on medians, sidewalks, and crosswalks and are located along ten blocks. The monument to the Great Northern Migration at 26 th Pl. and Victory Monument at 35 th St. frame the permanent outdoor exhibit.	Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Drive between 25 th -35 th Street
7	Ida B. Wells Monument	Social Activism & Civil Rights	The Light of Truth Ida B. Wells National Monument by sculptor Richard Hunt was completed, installed, and dedicated in 2021. It is a large metal and stone modern structure with a plaque, resembling an abstracted flame.	3729 S. Langley Avenue



Map#	Asset Name	Category	Description	Address
8	Lillian Marcie Theater	Arts & Culture	Plans to transform the historic former Marshall Field & Company Warehouse Stable from 1904 into the Lillian Marcie Theatre advanced with a \$3 million City of Chicago grant awarded in October 2021. The \$13.5 million arts complex will have a 350-seat main theater, a 100-set black box theater, and house the African American Museum of Performing Arts. The developer is renown actor Harry Lennix.	4343 S. Cottage Grove Avenue
9	Muddy Waters Home/MOJO Museum (Muddy Original Jam Out)	Arts & Culture	McKinley Morganfield's home was granted Chicago Landmark status in 2021 (protecting it from demolition) and is slated to become a community museum honoring the blues legend. Photography, art, stories, and memorabilia of Muddy Waters would be featured. It will feature a recording studio, youth education programs, music instruction and sell Muddy-inspired merchandise.	4339 S. Lake Park Avenue
10	National Museum of Gospel Music (planned)	Arts & Culture	Plans are underway to make the former Pilgrim Baptist Church site the home of the National Museum of Gospel Music. The proposed 45,000 square foot museum will feature multigenerational programming and educational exhibits, an auditorium seating up to 350 designed for television production, a collection of video archives including the Stellar Gospel Music Awards programming, a listening and research library.	3301 S. Indiana Avenue
11	Obama Presidential Center	Art & Culture	Groundbreaking occurred in September 2021 on the Obama Presidential Center and will comprise the official presidential archives, library and museum, a branch of the Chicago Public library, and several gathering spaces in 200,000 to 250,000 square feet.	6401 S. Stony Island Avenue
12	Obsidian House/ Justice D. Harry Hammer/Lutrelle 'Lu' & Jorja Palmer Mansion	Business & Entrepreneurial Pursuits	Historic mansion purchased in 2021 by The Obsidian Collection a non-profit with plans to retore the structure and turn it into an archive, museum and private club, The Obsidian House.	3656 S. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Drive



Table 1: New Assets in the Study Area

Map#	Asset Name	Category	Description	Address
13	Williams Park Field House	Recreation & Professional Sports	Construction of a new 11,200 sf fieldhouse building of a striking contemporary design. The improvements include entry lobby and reception area, gymnasium with storage and multipurpose club rooms for art, education, performances, meetings and exercise. Site improvements include a new spray pool, bike racks, landscaping, exterior lighting, and concrete sidewalks and benches.	2820 S. State Street
14	Provident Hospital	Health & Medicine	A new dialysis center opened in March of 2021 and plans for the larger \$240 million new facility are currently delayed due to the Corona virus pandemic. Cook County plans for the new building to be located to the west of the current, historic 1891 hospital structure.	550 E. 51st Street



Figure 2. New Assets in the Black Metropolis Study Area



Map #	Asset Name	Category	Description	Address
15	Bee Branch of the Chicago Public Library (CPL)	Education	In 2018 the CPL completed updates to the branch totaling \$2.32 million. It includes two additional floors with a new digital youth media lab for teens and adults and a dedicated early childhood area.	3647 S. State Street
16	Camp Douglas	Military Life	In winter 2020 the board of the Camp Douglas Restoration Foundation announced plans to create exhibits for a pop-up “traveling museum” they also applied for a battlefield preservation planning grant from the National Park Service (NPS). Although this grant was denied in 2021, they do plan to revise the application based on feedback from the NPS and reapply in 2022.	31st -33rd Place and S. Cottage Grove-S. Giles Avenues
17	The Forum	Arts & Culture	Urban Juncture is developing plans to restore the building, in 2020 the roof over Forum Hall was replaced. They received a State of IL Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity incubator grant to rehab the first-floor retail storefronts. Building on this success, the owner has begun the design process for the complete restoration of The Forum as an entertainment and hospitality venue.	318 E. 43rd Street
18	George P. Hall Branch of the Chicago Public Library	Education	In 2021 CPL created a new website landing page for its digital collections, as well as a redesigned website landing page for Chicago history. Collections include the George Cleveland Hall Branch Digital Collection.	4801 S Michigan Avenue
19	South Side Community Art Center	Arts & Culture	The organization recently celebrated its 80th anniversary and was awarded a National Trust “Hands-On Preservation Experience” grant which helped to restore historic windows and carry out exterior cleaning of the 1899 building.	3831 S. Michigan Avenue
20	Quinn Chapel African Methodist Episcopal	Religion & Social Services	In the last several years, the congregation has completed millions in capital improvement and restoration projects including all new electrical service, air conditioning, an elevator and American Disabilities Act (ADA) accessibility, a basement archive and museum space, wired conference rooms, and a new roof.	2401 S. Wabash Avenue
21	Rosenwald Courts (Michigan Boulevard Garden Apartments)	Urban Design & Green Infrastructure	Multiple award-winning renovation and restoration of this historic early 20 th century art deco 239-unit residential complex was completed in 2016. It was home to Nat King Cole, Duke Ellington and Lorraine Hansberry, among other notable residents.	4642 S. Michigan Avenue



Figure 3. Updated Assets in the Black Metropolis Study Area



Portrayal of Partnership Commitments

The table below is a summary of commitments that partners are willing to contribute to the successful implementation of the Black Metropolis National Heritage Area. (Originally listed as Appendix 4 in the 2013 study.) We are so pleased to share that a wide variety of partners will collaborate with the BMNHA to plan and execute programs, exhibits, tours, help to conduct fundraisers, and commit to making in-kind and financial contributions.

Table 3: Summary of Recent Partnership Commitments

Organization	Activity	Commitment of Resources	TA/Education Commitment
Black Metropolis Research Consortium (BMRC)	Host annual symposium, commission research papers, award grants to scholars	\$10,000 value of in-kind symposium costs	Work with BMRC member groups: DePaul University; Chicago History Museum on archival project
Bronzeville Community Development Partnership	Financial and Fundraising partner	Chicago Community Trust Grant \$15,000	Development of management plan for NHA; increase fundraising with ongoing appeals
Bronzeville Historical Society	Develop and conduct tours, exhibits and education programs	Support and outreach to community for archival project	Reciprocal referrals for international destination tourism
Calumet Heritage Area	Part of larger footprint that tells the story of the Great Migration	In-kind funding and support	Reciprocal educational and tourism opportunities in conjunction with Illinois and Michigan (I&M) Canal Corridor NHA
Camp Douglas Restoration Foundation	Develop and conduct tours, interpretation materials	Support for NHA and committed outreach to legislators	Mutually planned and executed seminar on archeological discoveries in Bronzeville; paper by Dr. Gregory and Dr. Peterson
Chicago History Museum	Programmatic partner	Lending and licensing archival materials at no cost	Curatorial assistance with exhibits
Chicago Urban League (CUL)	Resource development partner	Host and co-produce annual fundraising event	Annual tour for CUL Impact fellows

Organization	Activity	Commitment of Resources	TA/Education Commitment
Emmett Till Home and Museum	Programmatic partner	Reciprocal funding assistance from NHA funds	Develop tours and exhibition materials
Illinois College of Optometry	Partner in community	Liaison with Community Affairs department	Lecture/presentation to new students and tours of neighborhood
Illinois Tech (Illinois Institute of Technology)	Partner in community	Liaison with Community Affairs department	Veteran's Day virtual presentation Blacks in Military History; Black History Month schools presentation
Obama Foundation	Destination tourism partner	Resource development	Community programming regarding the Great Migration for educators and schools
Pullman National Monument	Part of larger footprint that tells the story of the Great Migration	Working together to promote destination tourism by sharing information and resources	Integration into tour itineraries and referrals for visits
Quinn Chapel African Methodist Episcopal	Programming partner in community; Underground Railroad stop and great migration refuge	Working together to promote destination tourism by sharing information and resources	Integration into tour itineraries and referrals for visits
Julius Rosenwald and Rosenwald Schools National Park Campaign	Interpretation of historic buildings in Bronzeville with connection to Julius Rosenwald's role in supporting the growth of the Black Metropolis	Support for prospective center in Bronzeville or Chicago (other location)	Development of tour and program on the possibility of National Park center being in Bronzeville
South Side Community Art Center (SSCAC)	Program partner	Support for SSCAC will be incorporated into management plan	Incorporate into tours and reciprocal programs



